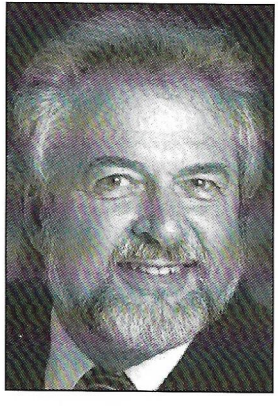
Lex A. Parker earns MMR #300

Lex first showed an interest in trains in South Africa at the age of three. His father, an engineer who ran South African Railways Beyer Garratts, probably inspired him. Born in South Africa in 1944, Lex also lived in Cairo, returned to South Africa, moved to England and finally immigrated to Canada in 1956.

Lex received his first model train for Christmas in England, an OO-gauge Hornby Dublo set. In Canada, an HO Athearn train set started him on his journey into model railroading, as he built his first layout on the floor of his parent's attic. As a Canadian, CNR and CPR were the obvious choices to model. He eventually joined the local model railroad club, H.O.M.E.S., and also the NMRA for a short time as he was pulled between trains and racing cars. However, the lure of trains kept his hand in model railroading. In 1976, Lex met a live steam modeler and began an extension of his railroad hobby, building several live steam engines and a locomotive. However, he found that it was difficult to carry on two intensive hobbies and decided to focus on model railroading.

Soon Lex was given a stack of *Model Railroader* magazines and was inspired by illustrated scenes of John Allen's model railroad on the back covers. No one else seemed to attempt the weathering that Allen did and Lex was motivated to develop his scratch building and weathering techniques for structures, rolling stock and locomotives. Soon he was painting and weathering locomotives for a local hobby shop to fund his model railroading.

On a visit to Cass., WV, in 1978, a friend introduced Lex to narrow gauge and specifically to On3. After much investigation, Lex decided to model the D&RGW as an alternative to what everyone else was doing in his area. He wanted to offer something different for others to enjoy and the D & R G W met his needs for both topography and time period. It was soon after this that he and several narrow-gauge modelers started a group known as the Maple Leaf Mafia. This group is still active in the Niagara Region of Southern Ontario. During the course of the next few years, Lex experimented with various track plans and different eras to model, finally deciding on Chama, NM. He found Chama to be a gem locked in time that could be visited and studied. As a result, in 1981



he started a new point-to-point layout in the basement of his new home. Lex attended many National Narrow Gauge Conventions over the next few years and submitted several models that all won awards.

Over the years his layout was photographed and published in *The Bulletin, Model Railroader, Railroad Model Craftsman and Narrow Gauge & Shortline Gazette.* Unknowingly he had begun preparation for his MMR. The layout was substantially finished in 1996 and then was taken down. Lex began building a new loop layout the following year with the knowledge and skills developed from the previous layout. For Lex, the "journey" was the joy, not the final layout. This new layout also represents Chama, NM. Most structures and cars are scratch built and the track is hand-laid. Hand-painted background murals and scenery represent the Colorado and New Mexican countryside. As a professional registered interior designer and rendering artist, Lex takes great enjoyment in the visual aspects of the scene he creates

After rejoining the NMRA two years ago, Lex was soon encouraged by friends Bill and Mary Miller, to submit his efforts to the NMRA Achievement Program. He recently achieved eight Achievement Certificates at once to earn MMR #300 (Cars, Structures, Scenery, Prototype, Civil, Electrical, Volunteer and Author). Presently, Lex is a member and the Web master of both the Niagara Frontier Region (www.drgwrr.com/nfr) and the International Division (www.drgwrr.com/id) of the NMRA. You can view Lex's layouts, as well as his published articles on modeling, at www.drgwrr.com.

—Susan M. Parker